

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6939

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

S E C R E T JAKARTA 2814

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO, ID

SUBJECT: U.S. VIEWS ON PORTUGUESE TIMOR

REF: A. CANBERRA 1357; B. LISBON 1101; C. JAKARTA 040902Z

MARCH (NOTAL); D. JAKARTA 2022; E. JAKARTA 2488; F. JAKARTA 2589.7
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1. FOLLOWING PRESENTS EMBASSY'S THOUGHTS ON QUESTIONS ON
PORTUGUESE TIMOR QUESTION OUTLINED IN PARAS 6, 7 AND 8
REF A FOR DEPARTMENT'S USE IN FORMULATING REPLY TO GOA.

2. POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS OF EARLY USE OF
MILITARY FORCE BY INDONESIA: ASEAN NEIGHBORS WOULD PROBABLY
REACT MILDLY, PERHAPS EVEN EXPRESSING "UNDERSTANDING" OF
INDONESIAN CONCERNS WHICH HAD LED TO STEP. (INDEED, THERE
ARE REPORTS MALAYSIA HAS URGED GOI TO SEIZE PORTUGUESE
TIMOR QUICKLY.) IN LONGER RUN MALAYSIA, WHICH HAS COMMON -
AND IN PARTS UNCLEAR -BORDER WITH INDONESIA IN
KALIMANTAN, AND PHILIPPINES WHICH REPORTEDLY CLAIMS
A FEW SMALL ISLANDS ALSO CLAIMED BY INDONESIA MIGHT REGARD
SUHARTO GOVERNMENT WITH LESS COMPOSURE THAN BEFORE.
THIS IS, HOWEVER, UNCERTAIN AND IN ANY CASE UNLIKELY TO
AFFECT GOI ACTIONS OR PLANS. EUROPEAN EMBASSY
REPRESENTATIVES STATE THAT TAKING OF TIMOR WOULD CAUSE
LITTLE REACTION IN EUROPE. EMBASSY LISBON STATES GOP

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REACTION WOULD BE TO "SEND A SHIP AND BRING SMALL PORTUGUESE COLONY BACK TO METROPOLE" (REF B), IMPLYING GOP WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE SITUATION THROUGH PRESSURE VIA ITS FORMER AFRICAN COLONIES. LESS EASY TO EVALUATE IS LIKELY REACTION OF LDCS IN UN (DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO ASK USUN EVALUATION.) HOWEVER, GIVEN RELATIVE LACK OF REACTION IN UN TO AFRICAN CASES INVOLVING PEOPLE OF SAME COLOR (E.G., BURUNDI), THERE MIGHT BE ONLY LIMITED INTEREST IN TIMOR SITUATION WHICH WOULD NOT HAVE PRIMARILY RACIAL OVERTONES.

3. AND, FINALLY, THERE REMAINS QUESTION OF U.S. DOMESTIC AND CONGRESSIONAL REACTION. WHILE TIMOR RELATIVELY UNKNOWN IN U.S., GIVEN RECENT CONGRESSIONAL MOVES INTO CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS IN CASES INVOLVING HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LIKELIHOOD THAT ANY INVASION OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR WOULD INVOLVE USE OF MAP-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT, FROM JAKARTA VANTAGE POINT THERE APPEARS AT LEAST FAIR POSSIBILITY OF SERIOUS ADVERSE REACTION, WHICH COULD LEAD TO CONGRESSIONAL ACTION TO SUSPEND MILITARY ASSISTANCE, ETC. DEGREE TO WHICH INDONESIA COULD CREATE RELATIVELY PLAUSIBLE INCIDENT OR REASON TO USE FORCE, LENGTH OF CAMPAIGN (A SHORT ONE COULD SUPPORT A THESIS PORTUGUESE TIMORESE WELCOMED ACTION), ET. WOULD APPEAR TO BE RELEVANT FACTORS. (IN THIS REGARD, VIEWS OF H WOULD BE USEFUL.)

4. HOW QUICKLY COULD INDONESIANS SEIZE CONTROL OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR IF THEY RESORT TO FORCE: DEFENSE ATTACHE STUDY REF C INDICATES GOI HAS SUFFICIENT ASSETS TO LAUNCH AN ARMED ATTACK AGAINST PORTUGUESE TIMOR IF DECISION IS MADE TO DO SO, AND ESTIMATES THAT INDONESIAN MILITARY FORCES WOULD HAVE LITTLE DIFFICULTY TAKING DILI AND COASTAL AREAS WITHIN TWO TO THREE DAYS BUT MIGHT FACE A DRAWN-OUT GUERRILLA ACTION IN MOUNTAINOUS INTERIOR AREAS. THERE ARE RELIABLE REPORTS THAT THE INDONESIAN ARMED FORCES ARE PREPARING TO UNDERTAKE MILITARY ACTION ON SHORT NOTICE, IF SO DIRECTED. CONSUL SURABAYA, WHO VISITED TIMOR IN DECEMBER, AGREES WITH GOA INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE THAT THERE WOULD BE CONTINUED RESISTANCE FROM TRIBES AND THAT GOI COULD NOT SPEEDILY CRUSH OPPOSITION
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(PARA 7, REF A).

5. IS THERE A POTENTIAL PROBLEM OUTSIDE INTERVENTION? THERE APPEARS TO BE NONE. ASSUMING (AS DOES REF B) THAT PORTUGAL WOULD NOT ATTEMPT A MILITARY RESUPPLY, AND (AS WE DO) THAT NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES SUCH AS AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND OR THE ASEAN STATES WOULD NOT

INTERVENE, THERE REMAIN AS CREDIBLE POTENTIAL SOURCES OF INTERVENTION ONLY USSR AND PRC. USSR IS ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH GOI, AND WOULD NOT SEEM LIKELY TO SPOIL THIS PROCESS OVER TIMOR. PRC IS ALSO ATTEMPTING IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ASEAN NATIONS AND WOULD NOT SEEM LIKELY INVOLVED ITSELF IN VISIBLE INTERVENTION, ALTHOUGH SOME UNDERCOVER INFILTRATION MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. THERE ARE NO OVERT OR COVERT REPORTS INDICATING ANY NATION CONSIDERING INTERVENTION TO ASSIST PORTUGUESE TIMORES IF INDONESIA ATTACKS.

6. WAYS IN WHICH INDONESIANS COULD BE PERSUADED TO STAY THEIR HAND. GOI APPEARS TO FEAR THAT EITHER A) GOP IS PLANNING SOME SECRET DEAL WITH FRETELIN/UDT TO TURN TIMOR OVER TO THEM PRECIPITATELY, IGNORING PLEDGE TO PROVIDE FOR INTERIM PERIOD DURING WHICH INDONESIA COULD IMPROVE ITS IMAGE IN TIMOR; OR B) PRESENT GOP MAY WISH TO COOPERATE WITH INDONESIA BY PROVIDING FOR INTERIM PERIOD, BUT IS WEAK, AND LIKELY TO BE REPLACED BY A MORE LEFTIST GOP WHICH WILL NOT COOPERATE. THEREFORE, SINCE QUANTUM OF PERSUADING GOI TO STAY HAND WOULD APPEAR TO BE A) PERSUADING GOI THAT GOP IS SUFFICIENTLY STABLE THAT ITS PLEDGES CAN BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, AND B) PERSUADING THEM THAT GOP IS NOT PLOTTING WITH FRETELIN/UDT AND WILL INDEED ARRANGE FOR AN INTERIM PERIOD. FORTHCOMING MEETING BETWEEN ALI MURTOPO AND FERNANDO SOARES IN PRAGUE (NOT LISBON) (REF G) COULD PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOP TO CONVINCE GOI OF ITS SINCERITY; HOPEFULLY GOI WILL JUDGE POST-ELECTION GOP AS STABLE.

7. HOW COULD U.S. AND AUSTRALIA PRESENT ISSUE TO SKEPTICAL DOMESTIC AUDIENCES. SHOULD INDONESIA SEIZE TIMOR, AUSTRALIA WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE A MORE DIFFICULT DOMESTIC PROBLEM THAT WOULD U.S., GIVEN PROXIMITY,
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STATIONING OF AUSTRALIAN MILITARY IN TIMOR DURING WORLD WAR II, ETC. BASIC CONTINGENCY PAPER (REF D) PROVIDES EMBASSY THINKING ON HOW WE SHOULD PRESENT A TAKEOVER TO U.S. AUDIENCE. SHOULD TAKEOVER BE EFFECTED QUICKLY, WITH SOME SEMBLANCE OF LOCAL ACQUESCENCE, DOMESTIC U.S. PROBLEM WILL BE REDUCED, WHEREAS IF TAKEOVER HAMPERED BY DETERMINED LOCAL RESISTANCE, U.S. PUBLIC OPINION WILL REACT STRONGLY.

8. WOULD THERE BE SIGNIFICANT UN PROBLEM AFTER INDONESIAN SEIZURE OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR. VIEWS SUBSUMED UNDER PARA 2 ABOVE.
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